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ABSTRACT

Seven videotapes of teachers teaching under the eye of trained teacher advisers and discussing their efforts with the advisers, coupled with interviews with the teachers and advisers involved, provided researchers with information on effective adviser-teacher relationships. The seven videotaped conferences selected for analysis involved advisers with 1 to 3 years' experience and teachers practicing at levels from the first grade to high school. Each adviser in the Marin County (California) Office of Education's Teacher Advisor Project was a teacher assigned on a full-time basis to advise teachers at up to four school sites. The adviser role involved recruiting teachers to be advised, organizing observations and conferences, and offering advice (though the tapes revealed such instances were rare in practice, for several possible reasons). The tapes illustrated six principles of face-to-face advising. Three involved talk about teaching: the use of common language, the ability to focus, and the provision of hard evidence. The other three enhanced collegial trust: the encouragement of interaction, reliance on a predictable agenda, and the display of reciprocal respect. Examples were drawn from the tapes to illustrate successful interactions and successful conference leadership by advisers. (PGD)

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS: PRINCIPLES AND SKILLS OF "ADVISING"

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November, 1984

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS:
PRINCIPLES AND SKILLS OF "ADVISING"

Introduction

Recent efforts to expand professional opportunities and rewards for teachers, and parallel efforts to expand the resources directed to school improvement, have merged in the form of "master teacher" or "mentor teacher" plans. The utility of these plans rests on the ability of persons to work directly with one another on problems of teaching and learning. The challenge is to devote close, sometimes fierce, attention to teaching while preserving the integrity of teachers.

Among the potentially most useful yet most demanding interactions among teachers will be those that focus on actual classroom performance. Such interactions allow teachers the opportunity to learn from and with one another, engaging in in-depth reflection on crucial aspects of curriculum and instruction. At the same time, such interactions place teachers' self-esteem and professional respect on the line. They expose how teachers teach, how they think about teaching and how they plan for teaching to the close scrutiny of peers.

A highly regarded Teacher Advisor Project presents an opportunity to examine advisor-teacher interactions that are closely bound to observed classroom practice. Over a three-year period, experienced advisors have learned to construct detailed commentary on teaching and to display skillful reciprocity in their dealings with teachers. They have come close to the classroom without coming close to the bone. With regard to direct involvement with teachers, the advisors' roles are parallel to those envisioned in master and mentor teacher plans,

and in descriptions of the senior positions in career ladder plans. The perspectives and skills of advising have broad utility.

The Skills of Advising Study is one component of a larger set of Professional Development Studies that combine qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the professional development and professional work life of teachers. Using a combination of videotape and interview data, this study examines the dynamics of "advising" based in classroom observation. Its main objectives are:

> To add depth and specificity to our understanding of the technical and social skills that teachers and advisors employ in their work together.
>
> To reveal major challenges or dilemmas in the evolution of advisor-like roles in the teaching profession.
>
> To examine the conditions under which teachers can advise one another on matters of curriculum and instruction.
>
> To strengthen the training curricula and materials for teachers and teacher educators who assume leadership in the improvement of teaching.

THE SKILLS OF ADVISING PROJECT

In a joint venture by the Far West Laboratory and the Marin County Teacher Advisor Project, teacher advisors, teachers and researchers assembled and analyzed videotapes of advisor-teacher conferences based on classroom observation. Conference tapes were completed during the spring of 1984 by eight of the ten project advisors, in collaboration with fourteen teachers. In independent interviews following each conference, researchers asked the participating advisors and teachers to "talk through" the tape and to discuss their experience with observation and feedback. Interviews were completed with each of the advisors and with eight of the fourteen teachers.*

All of the participating teachers were volunteers who accepted the advisors' invitation to join the study. Some, but not all, of the teachers had attended training conducted by the advisors, and so were on a certain common ground with them. Other participants were less familiar with the advisors' ideas and language, but agreed to participate because they judged the advisors as individuals to be thoughtful, hard-working and well-intentioned.

Of fourteen completed videotapes, seven were transcribed for analysis. Researchers completed an independent analysis of the tapes, relying on a small set of theoretical dimensions that have been found fruitful in describing patterns of collegiality and leadership. The coding guide is appended.

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*Four advisors collected more than one conference videotape. In each case, we selected the tape of the best technical quality to transcribe and analyze. Seven of the eight advisors had at least one usable videotape. Interview time was concentrated on those teachers and advisors who appeared in the selected tapes.

Seven conference videotapes serve as the basic data for this report. Each conference has been transcribed and coded. Transcripts were formatted to create a visual display of degree of interaction, and to distinguish easily between the advisor's and teacher's contributions to the discussion (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

TRANSCRIPT FORMAT

CODES/COMMENTS	ADVISOR	TEACHER
	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	
		XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	
		XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	

THE CONFERENCES

The seven conferences are diverse in grade level and subject matter (see Table 1), but have two crucial characteristics in common:

First, they are rare events. Even in these schools to which teacher advisors have been assigned on a regular basis, interactions that bring advisors close to teachers' thinking about teaching or to their classroom performance are infrequent. The bulk of advisors' work, as recorded on their routine contact logs, has occurred outside the classroom (Kent, 1984). For five, this is a first conference; for the remaining two have conducted conferences, but the use of videotape is new.

Second, the conferences are extraordinary events. Without exception, the participating teachers found the conferences stimulating, rewarding, even "an ego boost." Because the analysis that follows casts a sometimes critical eye on conference interaction, these comments from teachers assume additional importance. From the point of view of the teachers, these conferences "worked," offering a professional opportunity that most would eagerly repeat.

> It was an opportunity to talk about what was on my mind during the lesson. And having what I was doing pointed out made it that much clearer. [I'll be] more conscious in planning next time. (VII, teacher interview)

> It sure passed quickly and I enjoyed it. I could have done it for a long time. (I, teacher interview)

> This was so helpful! (VI, transcript)

> I feel [the lesson] went well, and to have you say that you thought it went well is real important to me. And [the video] is fascinating to watch and it is something I would like to do more. I think it's the greatest basis for sharing because you see more when you come back to look at the tape. (VII, transcript)

I found it very beneficial for you to come in today, on a Monday, after we'd only been in class for twenty minutes. Mondays are usually very, very difficult...and I thought this would be an excellent time for you to come in and see if I could get them focused and on task. (III, transcript)

Table 1

THE BACKGROUND OF THE SEVEN CONFERENCES

Tape Number	Advisor's Experience	Teacher's Grade/Subject	Did Advisor Observe Teacher Before?	The Observed Lesson
I	First year	First grade	No	Activities designed to lead children to recognize and state the rule for making the plural form of singular nouns ending in y.
II	First year	High school mathematics	No	Advanced lesson on using mathematical induction to arrive at proof for trigonometry theorem.
III	First year	First grade	Yes	Art lesson on constructing butterflies, involving multiple steps, several materials, handling water.
IV	Second year	Middle school multiple subjects	No	Advisor demonstrates "synectics" model from Joyce and Weil's Models of Teaching, focusing on divergent thinking and creative writing.
V	Second year	Fourth grade	No	Students select one important idea from material they have read and present it to the class.
VI	Third year	Eighth grade mathematics	Yes	Introduction of the Pythagorean Theorem.
VII	Third year	Middle school social studies	Yes	Practice with principles of categorization, based on Feuerstein's approach to "instructional enrichment."

THE ROLE OF THE ADVISOR

Who Are the Advisors?

Advisors are teachers on special assignment, released from the classroom full time and paid according to the established teachers' pay scale. Based in a county office of education, they combine county-wide training programs with part-time services to specific schools. Each advisor is assigned up to four school sites for the school year. In the 1983-84 school year, the Teacher Advisor Project had four "third-year" advisors, two "second-year" advisors and four "first-year" advisors.

Selection criteria and procedures are closely aligned to the perceived requirements of the advisor's role. Advisors are selected on the basis of their reputed record of accomplishment in the classroom, their prior involvement in professional development, and their demonstrated ability to work in a consulting capacity with teachers. Selection procedures begin with a formal application and written recommendations from peers. Promising candidates participate in a sequence of in-depth interviews that include simulations of an advisor's interactions with teachers.

In early stages of the project, the project director and advisors thought hard and often about the advisors' role, attempting to make sense of their relations to teachers, principals, and curriculum specialists. Those deliberations have gradually diminished as experienced advisors have gained confidence in what they have to offer and as the escalating number of requests has squeezed the time that advisors can spend together. Advisors continue to participate in weekly meetings as a group, during which they discuss recurrent

issues, evaluate new areas of work, and propose solutions to problems encountered on site or in training sessions. Nonetheless, requests for advisors' services have expanded rapidly, leaving little time to train and advise newcomers to the staff.

New advisors are simultaneously supported and made vulnerable by the program's record of success. While past successes generate a halo effect that extends to new advisors (disposing teachers and principals to look favorably upon them from the start), those same successes also establish a standard of performance that new advisors may find difficult to meet.

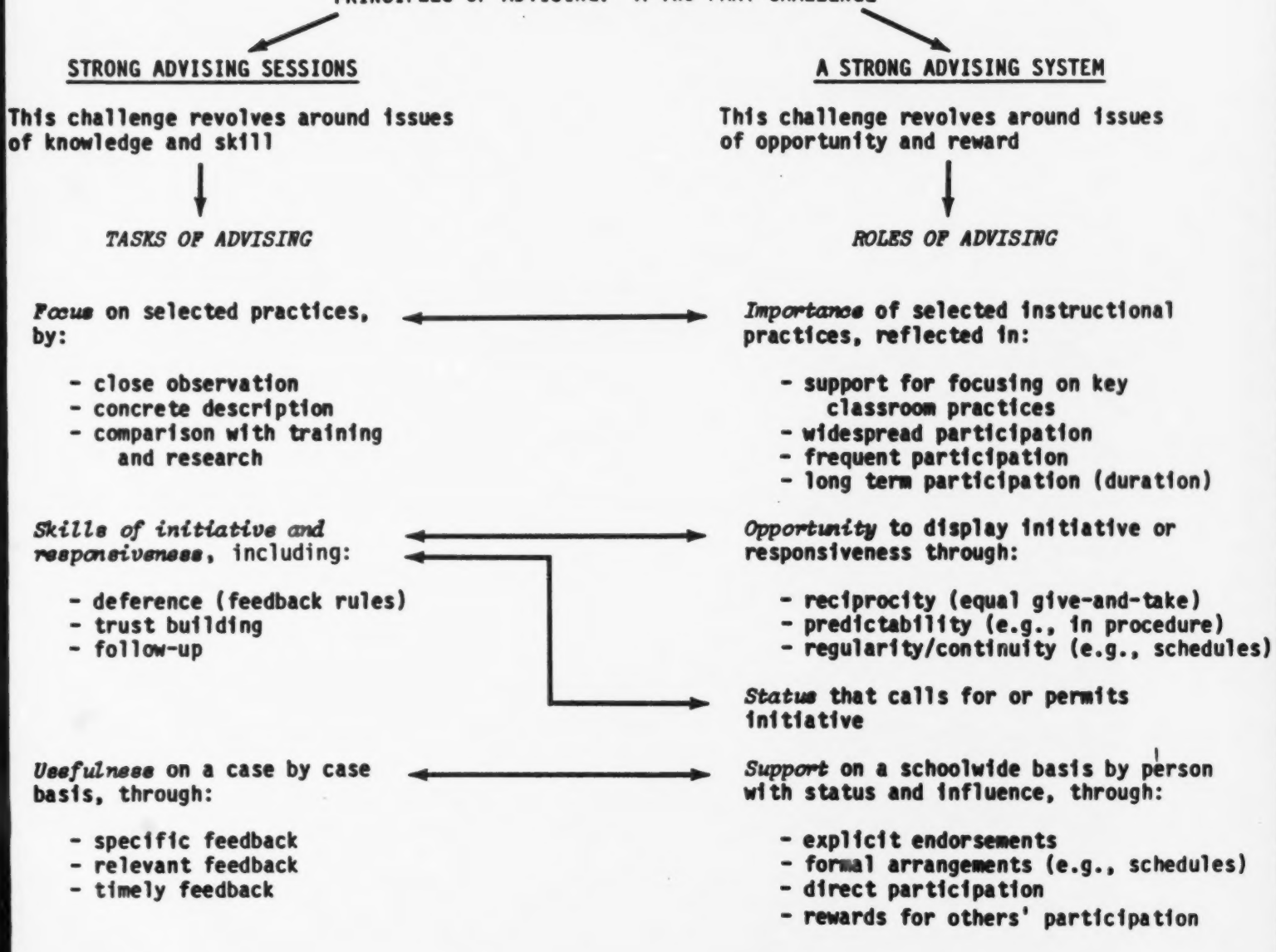
Gaining Acceptance for the Advisor Role

The advisor program has a two-part challenge. First, individual advisors must succeed, on a case-by-case basis, in making individual instances of shared work with teachers productive. Second, advisors as a group, working in concert with teachers and administrators, must succeed in establishing "advising" as a set of habits and preferences in schools (see Figure 2).

This report deals primarily with the first of these challenges. It unravels the dynamics of face-to-face work between advisors and teachers, detailing the ways in which they work together to examine specific classroom lessons. Nonetheless, the two challenges are inextricably related. Each instance of an advisor's work with a teacher is necessarily based on a claim about the role of advisor that is not trivial, even if it remains unspoken. The claim is this: that the advisor by virtue of his or her position has something of worth to offer that deserves the attention of the teacher.

Figure 2

PRINCIPLES OF ADVISING: A TWO-PART CHALLENGE


STRONG ADVISING SESSIONS
This challenge revolves around issues of knowledge and skill
TASKS OF ADVISING
Focus on selected practices, by:
- close observation
- concrete description
- comparison with training and research
Skills of initiative and responsiveness, including:
- deference (feedback rules)
- trust building
- follow-up
Usefulness on a case by case basis, through:
- specific feedback
- relevant feedback
- timely feedback
A STRONG ADVISING SYSTEM
This challenge revolves around issues of opportunity and reward
ROLES OF ADVISING
Importance of selected instructional practices, reflected in:
- support for focusing on key classroom practices
- widespread participation
- frequent participation
- long term participation (duration)
Opportunity to display initiative or responsiveness through:
- reciprocity (equal give-and-take)
- predictability (e.g., in procedure)
- regularity/continuity (e.g., schedules)
Status that calls for or permits initiative
Support on a schoolwide basis by person with status and influence, through:
- explicit endorsements
- formal arrangements (e.g., schedules)
- direct participation
- rewards for others' participation

In making good on that claim, advisors have certain resources upon which they can rely and certain occupational and organizational realities with which they must contend.

The existence of a formally assigned role. The very fact that there exists a titled position of "advisor" constitutes a powerful resource. The title and the full-time assignment confer institutional value upon advising. By selection (rigorous) and training (extra), the advisors have presumably established their qualifications to serve in the position.

Yet the advisor role has neither the force of bureaucratic authority nor the weight of tradition behind it. Advisors can apply no formal sanction (for good or ill), and can wield little direct influence over teachers' future rewards or opportunities. Advisors' influence is achieved informally, in interaction. The rewards of advising, like those of teaching itself, are primarily the psychic rewards of intellectual and emotional satisfaction.

Further, the formal role of advisor places teachers on unfamiliar ground with one another. There are no advisors in the teaching profession. There are no established traditions in the profession (despite local institutional variations)* by which teachers receive advice on their teaching, or offer advice to others--no matter how desperately needed or well founded the advice (Nemser, 1983). Teachers report that the advice they have received from others has been typically well-intended and generously offered, but it has also

---

*The role of advisor, as conceived in the Teacher Advisor Project, is quite similar to the advisor positions associated with the implementation of open space schools and with the development of teachers' centers (Feiman and Devaney, n.d.).

been infrequent, fragmented, and uninformed by a shared grasp of the relevant classroom details. During their career, few teachers have encountered reasons to weigh one set of principles or one body of knowledge over another. Predictably, many teachers rely largely on their individual preferences and pride themselves on their independent accomplishments (Little, 1981).

The advisor role is a departure from occupational precedent. It introduces the premise that one group of teachers has sufficient knowledge and skill to give advice to other teachers, and to have advice-giving be judged meaningful and appropriate. The implications of the advisor role appear inescapable; the term that conventionally corresponds to "advisor" is "advisee." To serve as an advisor requires precisely the premise just suggested: that some teachers do earn the right to advise others by virtue of their own classroom performance, out-of-classroom study, and demonstrated initiative.

The advisors struggle with the implication of their title, understanding full well that claims to expert status do not accord with accepted understandings and practices in teaching. Placed in an ambiguous, anomalous situation, they seek ways to gain a measure of acceptance from teachers. They emphasize collegial (equal) relations, retreat from statements that imply evaluation or judgment, and express their ambivalence about the special status signalled by their title:

> The title "advisor" connotes an unequal relationship. I prefer collaborative problem-solver, facilitator, being a colleague. I never try to set myself up as an expert. (Advisor interview)

Perceived expertise as a basis for relations among teachers. Advisors are humble about their expertise. The very assertions of

knowledge and skill that give credence to the title of advisor also make advisors' relations with teachers problematic. Given a title, time and access to schools, advisors have the momentous job of proving themselves to teachers. Advisors display confidence in group training sessions, where strong claims about "effective" pedagogy can readily be dissociated from any one teacher's classroom methods. Face to face with individual teachers, however, one advisor says, "I think it's presumptuous of me to be too analytical."

The teachers with whom advisors work show less reluctance to accord the advisors their due, to celebrate their expert status, or to adopt the stance of learner. Judging by teachers' comments, the advisors' reputation for exemplary classroom performance combines with their record of additional study, training, sound judgment, high energy and respectful demeanor to gain advisors entry into teachers' classrooms. One teacher describes herself as being "under the tutelage" of an advisor. Another, highly regarded on her own faculty, says "People view me as a good classroom teacher [but] they view her as an expert in education."

Earning Their Keep--and Their Name

In the absence of established leadership traditions consistent with the advisor role, selection for the position carries no guarantee that advisors will be accepted by teachers. Each advisor, acting as an entrepreneur, has had to establish credibility. Each has had to carve out opportunities in which his or her ability to contribute could become evident. To highlight the advisors' difficulty, we can consider the fact that even inept building principals receive the deference if not the willing respect of their faculties. A princi-

pal's right to take initiative comes with the territory; an advisor's must be won.

Drumming up business. Advisors tell elaborate tales of getting started in a school. Their stories have a tentative, halting flavor to them, and serve well to highlight the extraordinary character of the videotaped conferences.

Advisors and teachers share the dilemma of getting started with one another. Struggling over how to make use of advisors, one teacher says, "You don't want to ask her to do something that might be demeaning." Teachers are quietly perplexed about how to proceed; some become resentful of the hours advisors spend in the lounge (trying to drum up business) while teachers are hard at work in classrooms. Advisors' open-ended invitation to "Use me," leaves teachers hesitant to propose anything that might cast the advisor in the role of "go-fer" or aide. Meanwhile, the teachers believe, advisors are hesitant to propose specific projects with teachers for fear of "stepping on toes." The result is a strange dance that transpires mostly in the teachers' lounge, mostly at a polite distance, and rarely in the more intimate environs of the classroom.

The teachers' lounge turns out to be "the best time and the worst time" to contact teachers. Teachers are free of other distractions and available for talk. But the teachers' lounge simply does not have the same significance as the classroom. By spending large amounts of time in the lounge, advisors give the appearance of working less than teachers: "I can't see what she's doing." Invitations--or at least conversations--picked up for one advisor during the Skills of Advising Study when teachers saw him carting video equipment through the halls.

To get past the teachers' lounge, advisors have recruited interested individuals on a case-by-case basis. In interviews, teachers speculated that advisors have had more latitude than they have typically used to propose specific projects with teachers. One teacher argues that the first move is best made by the advisor, whose role in the school is unfamiliar and ambiguous. Without compromising other virtues (e.g., that the work remain voluntary, and that it be relevant to the teachers and school), the advisor can make a pitch to teachers about work worth doing. The advisor's proposals, she says, must be "very specific": "This is what I've done before. This is what I'd like to try with you."

Do advisors give advice? Advisors only rarely give direct advice in their face-to-face conferences with teachers. Among the seven conferences, there are seventeen coded instances of advice-giving by advisors. More than one-third of those are concentrated in one conference. Two first-year advisors gave no advice. Together, the third-year advisors accounted for almost 60% of the advice-giving. Advice, when offered, typically prompts a lengthier discussion of classroom strategy.

An advisor proposes:

> One thing I noticed is that you have the overhead up here, left, and you have your voice and directions coming from over here, right, and what you get from the kids is "tennis." ...I think it would be worth experimenting with delivering a lesson from where their attention is visually, and keep it all in one area.

And the teacher responds:

> That's fascinating because I did that for so long and I even used to stand behind the podium a lot and lean on it because it was comfortable. And I thought I was spending too much time in front of the class and so I started pulling myself away from it. But I just started to use

the overhead more.

> I'll experiment with being in front [when I'm using] the visual... maybe that would help my other class, too, if I were more central.

In the eyes of the participating teachers, advice is an acceptable part of an observation conference. One teacher expects her advisor to provide "cues and clues". Another describes herself as under the "tutelage" of her advisor. A third was relatively sanguine about the prospect that her work would be criticized:

> She asked me if I was uncomfortable with the video, or afterwards when she would talk about the lesson. She didn't use the word "criticize," but that was implicit in it, that she might want to point out what she liked and didn't. So I said, sure, that that didn't bother me. (I, Teacher interview)

We are left asking why we see less advice than we might anticipate. Several interpretations seem plausible.

A secure knowledge base. First, advisors may believe that they know too little about a specific teacher's intentions and practice, or too little about the observed grade or subject, or too little about general principles of curriculum and pedagogy to construct specific advice.

The fact that advisors frequently and confidently offer group training in "instructional skills" casts doubt on the last of these reasons. Advisors have faith in the instructional skills approach as a point of departure for work in classrooms, and as a guide to planning and delivering instruction. In their conference feedback, all the advisors rely heavily on the language and constructs of instructional skills to tell teachers what they have observed. In so doing, they attempt to establish one basis of common knowledge,

against which specific advice might be judged more or less sensible.

While secure in their general knowledge of pedagogy, advisors might reasonably doubt whether they understand enough about a specific curriculum area, classroom situation or teacher. Teachers emphasize the importance of shared curriculum knowledge and grade level experience. An advisor whose background is in English finds himself at a disadvantage in discussion with the high school math teacher he has observed. He says, "I have to work at being equal with him." His discomfort is reflected in Conference II when he confesses to the teacher, "I don't know trigonometry," and "this is a foreign language to me." By contrast, a junior high school teacher credits a productive and lively conference to the fact that she and the advisor together attended a recent training on critical thinking. The teacher planned a lesson and the advisor observed it, both of them "curious about how it would work out." The teacher explains, "We could talk from a strong common base. With a shared knowledge of curriculum, we can get to deeper levels."

Strategies that "empower" teachers. Advice may be in short supply because advisors are reluctant to introduce their own ideas in ways that undermine teachers' analyses and ignore teachers' aspirations. Seen in this light, the absence of advice reflects a deliberate and principled strategy for work with teachers. Such a strategy is consistent with findings from the Rand Corporation's major study of organizational change, in which external consultants frequently upstaged local staff by moving in too quickly with solutions to local problems (McLaughlin and Marsh, 1979: 78). One advisor reports, with some exasperation, "I keep wanting to jump in and say things." As a

group, the advisors have rehearsed the opening minutes of conferences to insure that the participation remains evenly balanced:

> We can stop this any time you want to. If there's something you want to see, say, "Wait, that looks interesting, let's talk about that." Ok? [I:1]

Professional etiquette. Finally, the relative absence of "advice" in the conferences may stem from the advisors' grasp of professional etiquette among teachers. Advice is not highly prized in teaching. Offering advice, especially unsolicited advice, runs counter to the valued, accepted, traditional behavior of teachers toward one another as colleagues.

Advisors are caught in a paradox. By training, they believe they have the responsibility to structure a conference, to highlight what they believe to have been important in the lesson, to judge what can be talked about and what cannot, and to concentrate on aspects of teaching that are both important and changeable. By long experience in the culture of teaching, however, advisors may find it difficult to act in a manner that may be seen as an assault on teachers' autonomy and independence (Feiman-Nemser and Floden, 1984).

Further, teachers themselves may be uncertain about the ground rules for conferences, and whether they should expect that any advice will be offered. One teacher says:

> She didn't make any suggestions for teaching. I don't know whether I was supposed to expect that. I didn't put my question to her as "This is something I'd like to work on." It would be interesting, but I didn't have the impression that's what we were doing. I don't think she did, either. (Teacher interview)

The etiquette surrounding advice-giving appears to be one instance of a larger phenomenon, in which the reluctance to assert

oneself on matters of curriculum and instruction is seen as proper restraint, an exercise of professional good manners. There is something here that deserves our attention, even if it brings us to the cliff edge in interpreting the available data.

Pushing the Limits of the Advisor Role

The advisor role can be examined from three perspectives: (1) the advisor as a colleague who models productive and vigorous professional relations; (2) the advisor as a staff developer or curriculum specialist who offers training and consulting on specific curricular or instructional topics; (3) the advisor as a knowledgeable senior colleague whose demonstrated knowledge, skill and energy warrant the title of advisor and the rights to initiative and leadership that go with it. The first perspective is most consistent with the descriptions offered by the advisors themselves. The third perspective deserves our attention in light of the recent press to expand leadership opportunities and rewards in the teaching career; the Teacher Advisor Project itself has been used as a model for California's Mentor Teacher Program, and its staff has been called upon to train first year mentors.

Advisors and teachers alike are attracted by the idea of leadership roles for teachers. By their language, however, both convey the impression that "facilitating" teachers is more acceptable than leading them; facilitation is more respectful of colleagues as persons and professionals, more gentle toward their humanity and their work. In the words and intonation they choose to describe their relations with teachers, advisors have surrounded their work with the imagery of "facilitation." Advisors are creative and diligent in their efforts

to assist teachers. They are eager to join teachers in working on something; they are hesitant to propose what the something should be. A more assertive stance appears to raise the spectre of heavy-handedness. Advisors worry that they will be seen as insensitive to others' preferences and blind to their talents; to act in a direct and assertive fashion may be to ride roughshod.

At issue here is whether the advisor role, with its implicit promises and claims, can be a leadership role in the improvement of teaching. To the extent that the advisors' title offers them no special status with teachers, no expert standing with regard to teaching, we can expect that a language of facilitation will prevail: advisors will invite teachers to decide how and when to use their services; they will draw upon images of assistance, responsiveness, support, and empathy more often and more vividly than images of direction, invention, and assertion; they will give advice when asked.

To the extent that the special status and expert standing of the advisors are accepted, we can expect to hear advisors more often speak a language of initiative. Without abandoning their facilitative practices, they will propose areas for joint work, make a case for topics or problems that deserve attention, bring tough questions to the surface, make straightforward assessments of more and less promising ideas, and offer to teach others what they know.

These are not statements about advisors' character or qualifications, but predictions about their probable actions based on the history of the profession and on the organization of teaching in most schools. To act the facilitator is to be far more in accord with tradition than to assert leadership on matters of curriculum and

instruction. In examining roles whose titles convey some promise of professional leadership, we can reasonably ask, Do their characteristic words and deeds lean more toward assertion and leadership, or more toward facilitation and support?

THE PRINCIPLES OF ADVISING

Drawing upon the seven conference transcripts and upon teacher and advisor interviews, we have examined six principles of face-to-face advising. These are not discrete technical skills, but are principles for skillful and productive relations tied to the improvement of teaching. In a discussion of talk about teaching, we examine how advisors' and teachers' command of a common language lends substance to their exchange. In a discussion of trust among colleagues, we examine how principles of reciprocity are preserved by advisors' demeanor and method.

A successful conference is the shared accomplishment of an advisor and teacher, in interaction. To represent the interactive character of the event, we have presented each of the inferred principles of advising in two parts. A first statement describes the "skillful pair;" a second statement describes the part played by the "skillful advisor."

Talk About Teaching

In prior research, talk about teaching has emerged as a hallmark of collegiality among teachers (Little, 1982). In the most vigorous schools, teachers' talk about teaching is impressively rich, complex, and concrete. Without relinquishing other interests at the school door, teachers concentrate a large part of their talk together on topics close to the classroom. Without relinquishing their good humor, teachers show themselves to be serious about teaching. The ability of advisors to stimulate, participate in, or lead collegial work with teachers rests heavily on their ability to talk credibly and

persuasively about the many facets of teaching.

In conference tapes and interviews, three principles govern productive talk about teaching.

I. Common Language

Skillful pairs agree upon the importance of a common language and make a deliberate move to use shared ideas and language to describe, understand and refine teaching.

Skillful advisors take the lead in conveying the importance of a shared language, locating and proposing key ideas and terms, teaching them to others, and using them appropriately and creatively in their own talk.

II. Focus

Skillful pairs focus on one or two key questions, issues, situations or problems and address them with depth, persistence, imagination and good humor.

Skillful advisors take the lead in making observations and conferences purposeful and focused: they propose a focus or invite teachers to propose one; they draw upon outside study and research as well as classroom experience to discuss the topic; they tie their notes and observation records tightly to the proposed focus; without being stilted, mechanical or overly rigid, they stick to the focus during conferences. They make their talk concrete and precise enough to be focused.

III. Hard Evidence

Skillful pairs speak to what they have seen, using a record of classroom interaction as a basis for generating questions, drawing conclusions, pursuing alternatives; skillful pairs work together to invent or select the observation method(s) that suit their purpose.

Skillful advisors convey the importance of an adequate record, and do a thorough job of collecting the evidence, in and out of the classroom, that will make the discussion rigorous and fruitful.

A Common Language

Advisors place high priority on developing a common language

that will make teaching more accessible and teachers less isolated. Their aim is to build a rapport with teachers that can stand up to, and even thrive upon, a close look at teaching. The advisors' commitment to a common language is shared by the teachers with whom they work most closely; teachers say they rely on advisors to help put organizing labels on diverse classroom events, to offer "cues and clues," and to "provide specificity." One teacher concludes, "this is a pretty high standard of two colleagues talking together. We're not just sitting there rapping. She expects that I have a certain level of knowledge, and I expect it of her." Others add:

> It's necessary to have the common vocabulary.
>
> We've talked a lot about language. When you give something a name, it's easier. If you can say, "that's step three," it's more accessible.

From the point of view of both advisors and teachers, a shared language takes the mystery out of an observer's comments and makes interpretation less "subjective." By relying on a common vocabulary, advisors help maintain a focus on specific principles and practices of teaching, rather than on the competence of individual teachers. An advisor says, "It's easier to talk freely when the examples are clear and both participants recognize them as such." Despite the inevitable low rumble about unnecessary jargon, the teachers who work most closely with the advisors find that a common language helps to unravel the complexities and subtleties of teaching, and is a resource for inventing new options.

Starting with teacher practice. The Advisor Project has been committed to promoting perspectives and practices that have been supported by research. In their first three years, advisors have

relied heavily on the classroom-based research of the last decade and on the approaches to instructional planning and delivery popularized by Madeline Hunter. In so doing, they have emphasized aspects of classroom interaction that are sufficiently concrete and precise to lend themselves to a distinct vocabulary and a set of observable classroom events. While advisors do not view teaching only through the eyeglasses of teacher behavior, they have concentrated primarily on teachers' classroom practices.

Local disputes and larger quarrels. The advisors' emphasis on teacher behavior is not without its critics. Some teachers question whether efforts to identify discrete elements of "effective instruction" are worthwhile. Others, particularly in secondary schools, question what they see as the over-generalization of direct instruction techniques derived from basic skills instruction in the elementary grades. Still others worry that close analysis of instruction will diminish the essential artistry in good teaching. The enthusiasm with which some teachers have greeted the advisors is matched by the reluctance or outright disagreement voiced by others.

The local debate over the emphasis on teachers' behavior has a familiar ring. It is echoed, both in substance and intensity, by disputes in the national literature in teacher education and professional development. Such disputes have been spawned by the recognition that the recommendations of Madeline Hunter (and to a lesser degree the findings of research on effective basic skills instruction) have become something of a cultural phenomenon in teaching and in inservice teacher education.

To some observers, the Hunter phenomenon signals an orientation

toward teaching that emphasizes skill over knowledge, and performance over understanding. They worry that a preoccupation with teacher behavior will smother the intellectually and emotionally lively pursuit of complex, subtle and ambiguous issues in teaching and learning. A professional development curriculum constructed on technical competencies appears to leave little room for a "slowly evolving grasp of underlying conceptual principles" (Nemser, 1983) or for broader educational questions that transcend each teacher's classroom experience (Lanier, 1984). Critics protest developments that they believe will over-rationalize and over-objectify teaching, stunting the professional growth of teachers.

The advisor-teacher conferences deserve scrutiny from this point of view. What do the conferences reveal about the breadth and depth of inquiry that advisors and teachers make into teaching? About the intellectual reach and emotional vitality evident in their work together? Does the "shared language" so avidly endorsed by advisors stimulate or stifle professional growth? While one-time tapes of a few conferences hardly add up to credible evidence on these questions, they do provide a small base on which to stand.

We will be wise to make neither too much nor too little of what we have here. We would make too much of these conferences if we claimed that they were scholarly inquiries into the fundamental issues of teaching and learning. We would make too little of them if we failed to recognize that they were detailed, probing examinations of teaching in action, and that they were, for most teachers, the only such occasion during the school year. Some discussions were richer, deeper, and more compelling intellectually than others; some advisors

and teachers were more fully engaged in discussion. All conferences, without exception, left teachers and advisors thinking harder about their work.

Advisors are persuaded that the basic concepts they now employ are theoretically, empirically and practically sound. As important as the present focus, however, is the model for professional study and experimentation that their work provides. The project has not ended its search for compelling ideas.

Neither advisors nor teachers claim that the perspectives and language of "instructional skills" are adequate to address all pressing questions or to sum up what teachers do when they teach. There are times in most conferences when the partners reach the useful limits of the instructional skills language before they have exhausted the perplexing problems of the classroom. Predictably, teachers and advisors reach places in their work together when they are uncertain that they have "seen" the same event, or when they lack the key ideas or the language to turn vague perceptions into clear statements. There are moments of muddling through, or groping for expression. At those moments, the gestures often become more vivid, the pauses more pregnant, the sounds of hesitation (uhs and ums) more frequent.

Beyond surface understanding. From one point of view, substantial opportunities may be missed by an overly narrow field of vision. From another point of view, a good faith effort to do well on narrow terrain may open up both the understanding and the willingness to try something of larger scale and larger consequence.

Conference V is the best illustration of this argument. In that instance, the participating teacher has been working all year to promote

cooperation among students. Wherever possible, she has tried to design lessons that call upon students to be responsible members of a group. This day's lesson is one of that sort. Individual students have reviewed available material and have selected key ideas to present to their peers. Each student is responsible to the group for making a good selection from the content, for presenting it succinctly to the group, and for attending seriously to the presentations of others. As a group, students are responsible for contributing to one another's learning.

The teacher's broader goals are in the background as the scheduled videotape session approaches. Knowing that she and the advisor have in common their familiarity with the instructional skills framework, the teacher elects to receive feedback on "the objective." By using the label "objective," the teacher acknowledges that she and the advisor have common ground, signals her willingness to act on it, and helps the advisor to organize her own observations. At the same time, she has understated her own sophisticated conception of her work, and has thereby given the advisor fewer ways to be truly useful.

This is a place where knowledgeable and sympathetic readers will feel compelled to leap to the defense of the advisor and the teacher, and rightly so. To yell "missed opportunity" is not to take away from the achievements of the day or to diminish the satisfaction that both people experienced. In fact, as the conference unfolded, the teacher's beliefs about learning and her aspirations for these fourth grade students did emerge. The teacher thought aloud in ways that made her long-term interests clear. The advisor worked hard at understanding how the teacher thought about the lesson and how she meant it

to fit in a larger frame.

It would be hard to imagine that the next encounter between this teacher and this advisor will not be richer still. From the teacher's point of view, her relations with an advisor will meaningfully extend her work with students; indeed, had she and the advisor been working all year on the problems of group socialization, peer relations, and fourth-graders' ability to approach content materials, "The class would be further along by now." In her interview, the teacher predicts that she will be more likely "next time" to pose questions to the advisor about students' relations to one another, or about how to design lessons and assignments that engage students more responsibly with their work and with each other. To the extent that the teacher does so, the advisor will have a more secure understanding of what to observe for in the class and what materials or research to locate outside the classroom.

Talking about instruction. The focus on teacher behavior serves to get the talk (and the relation) going. It is the vehicle by which advisors demonstrate their ability to "see" events in the classroom. At the close of conferences and again in interviews, teachers remark on the thoroughness of advisors' descriptions.

In the seven transcribed conferences, advisors make frequent and explicit use of the terminology they subsume under the broad heading of "instructional skills" (see Table 2). In six of the seven conferences, they rely on a core set of terms to examine how lessons are structured; their comments center most often on the clarity of what students are expected to learn (the "objective"), elements of direct instruction ("review," "modeling," "practice"), assessing

Table 2

ADVISORS' AND TEACHERS' USE OF INSTRUCTIONAL SKILLS TERMINOLOGY

Topic	Number of mentions across all conferences by: Advisors	Teachers
Instructional skills:		
Instructional delivery	58	11
Classroom management and discipline	13	3
Social organization and interaction	43	17
Learning theory	14	4
Other topics:		
Curriculum	11	18
Planning and decision-making	10	26

students' understanding ("checking," "monitoring") and pacing.

In the following exchanges between an advisor and a teacher, the elements of "teaching to an objective" serve as organizing principles for discussion:

Example 1: An advisor comments on a teacher's use of review in the opening moments of an eighth grade lesson introducing the Pythagorean Theorem:

> You did review square roots, and try to prepare them... And you got a fairly effective response with that, a lot of hands up....I feel it was a very good review activity, or what we can call transfer from the previous learning, and they felt real comfortable. And that's what a transfer does. It allows the student to take this new information and figure out where it goes...

Example 2: An advisor finds herself unclear about what a teacher expects students to learn, even though the directions for specific activities are clear:

> The other thing you asked me to look at was the objective, right? And I noticed in the beginning what you did, you told them the directions. ...Help me find it if I'm wrong because I wasn't sure about this. ... But I wasn't sure if you told them what your objective was for them. They knew what the assignment was, but your objectives...

Example 3: An advisor and teacher begin their conference by using the "objectives" terminology to locate a specific lesson in relation to longer term goals for students' reasoning ability.

A: Did you have a specific objective in mind?

T: Just to get them involved in categorizing. We've been working on logic problems all last week, and I want them to get into more formal reasoning. This class ... they tend to be scattered and I want to use this to pull them in.

A: So your objective was to get them to use what you call formal reasoning and have them focus on using this process [categorization].

T: Hmm hmm. I want to take them from categorizing, organizing, to their essays. They are having a terrible time setting up, really reading what's being asked of them, translating and then categorizing points and ideas, and I have a feeling this is really going to be able to transfer. So we are talking about logic, moving into categorization, and then I want to take them into the essay. Ok?

A: So a long term goal is going to be that they will be able to use this kind of reasoning, this kind of skill, when they are writing. Today you are looking for the kind of discussion that shows you that they are beginning to kind of think in ways...

How widely shared is the shared language? Advisors are well-practiced in using the instructional skills perspectives and language; the teachers are less so. Of the total number of coded "instructional skills" terms, seventy-nine percent (79%) were introduced by the advisor (see Table 2).

From the beginning of their tenure in the project, advisors have studied certain core ideas. They have attended formal training, watched videotapes and observed in classrooms. They have designed activities for introducing the ideas to others, and have conducted inservice training as individuals and in teams. In conferences with teachers, they are fluent in their command of the ideas and vocabulary. They connect specific events to more abstract labels and back up their descriptions with examples and explanations. They anticipate possible areas of confusion.

By comparison, the teachers are less familiar with the core ideas, less fluent and less automatic in their use of the terminology. Six of the seven teachers had participated in group training led by the advisors, and thus had a rudimentary familiarity with the main ideas and terms. They were prepared to recognize and understand the terms that were being used to label parts of a lesson, but were not necessarily accustomed to using the terms as part of their own working language for describing, thinking about, and planning for teaching. Even the most avid of the participating teachers has had considerably less opportunity than any advisor to learn the ideas and terms, to relate them to prior understandings, or to attach them to daily activity in the classroom.

At first, the prospects for talking past one another are high. In the press of time, the move toward a "shared language" may be no more than a list of terms passed from advisor to teacher at the beginning of a conference: looking at the list of terms, one teacher says "Some of these are new to me." In the example that follows, the advisor uses the word "transfer" to refer to connections that the teacher has helped children make between present instruction and past learning; the teacher interprets "transfer" to mean the use of a single teaching technique in two situations.

T: Last week we were working on changing y to i and adding es. And we'd doubled the consonant and add est. And so they'd had practice in doing the chart kind of set-up, and going thin, thinner, thinnest. So they followed me pretty well on that.

A: So it was a sort of transfer of things they had learned before.

T: Yeah, same technique, different idea.

The conference provides an opportunity to discover precise and concrete meanings and to arrive at mutual understanding. Sensitive to the slipperiness of words, experienced advisors use several strategies to build common understanding. They slow the pace, discussing fewer topics with more attention to detail. They stop to confirm their own understanding of teachers' comments by asking questions, paraphrasing responses, and rewording questions:

When you say closure, you mean...?

I think you said your objective was their finding an important part [in the material] and ... I was thinking that besides just the important parts, it was to be able to deliver the information and have other people get it. Is that right?

You did wonderful work with clarifying. You were constantly going back and rewording what students said, helping it to be clear for another student. I saw that time after time. Did you also see that?

When an advisor and teacher have a history of shared work, as they do in Conference VII, discussion achieves greater substantive depth. The language deepens and broadens. Partners are more confident that they mean the same by what they say. A relatively narrow concentration on teachers and teacher behavior gives way to an exploration of teacher thinking and the path from what teachers plan to how students learn. More probing attention is devoted to practices and their consequences, assertions are less tentative, more disagreements are aired, the teacher takes a more active part in the discussion, and the participants combine humor with serious talk more readily.

Focus

Among the toughest challenges that advisors and teachers face in these conferences is establishing and maintaining clear and meaningful focus--something to work on and toward together. By advisors' standards, the focus should be:

a) Important: something with a tested (or plausible) direct relation to learning;

b) Complex: something worth putting two heads together on;

c) Changeable: something that can reasonably be influenced and altered by teachers, alone or collectively.

Narrowing the ground. Advisors and teachers in six of the seven conferences made some kind of substantive topic or focus in discussions prior to the conference, and confirmed those agreements as the conference began.

A: What I would like you to do first of all so we keep it clear, what kind of feedback do you want from me? We sort of talked about the objective, but is there anything else?

T: One of the things I think would be good to talk about is learning modalities and the fact that it was basically limited to one today. (Conference V:1)

Staying on track. Narrowly bounded topics and well-defined observation methods are two resources by which advisors maintain focus and direction in their short conferences with teachers. In Conference III, a first year advisor relies on a detailed anecdotal record to organize feedback on the way a teacher shepherds first graders through a multi-step art lesson. She and the teacher have agreed on topics

that lend themselves to concrete description and for which the two of them share some standard of good practice. Thus, the teacher's general interest in her ability to "structure" an art lesson takes the form of three concrete, observable practices:

> You were particularly interested in the transition activities that you do, how you move children from one activity to another. And you also asked me to look at the way that you gave directions, whether those were clear to the students. And in general, were the children staying on task. So those four (sic) things were the focus of my observation. (Conference III:1)

In Conference VI, a third year advisor uses a standard "time on task" chart to make "sweeps" of students in an eighth grade math class at five minute intervals. Later, sitting at a table with the completed chart nearby, the advisor and teacher talk about the day's lesson. The topic of their talk is the pacing of the lesson; the method of charting time-on-task has provided them with some data to which they can and do refer as they work their way back through the lesson. The time-on-task data provide one means by which the teacher can judge her pace ("I'm conscious of the fact that I tend to rush"), the adequacy of her initial instruction, and the probability that she will have to concentrate her next lesson around extended practice:

> T: I don't think I did that much rushing today [but] I had wanted them to be able to practice twice before they left school--the simplest form, a version of the simplest form, meaning finding the missing leg, and a form that came out of the radical. ...The last ten minutes could have been twenty.

Throughout the discussion, the advisor makes reference to the time on task data, pointing out patterns:

> A: If I can use another piece of paper here to show you the third sweep, well, ...they were all involved [during the review]....

You moved into what I consider a focus activity [and] the instruction on the Pythagorean Theorem, and then you moved into the model. At least 90 to 95% of the kids were listening....

The majority of the students were paying attention. Tell me, who do you think you are likely to have problems with tomorrow?

In these two sets, when you were giving them instructions on how to do it, there were certain kids who were not paying attention. And therefore, those are the ones I would expect [to have difficulty].

Staying out of the swamp. Particularly in first-time conferences, advisors face a dilemma. They have a professional obligation to demonstrate their own knowledge and skill, and to be as broadly informative as possible to teachers. They feel a human obligation to acknowledge the strengths of the teacher whose work they have observed. And they feel a collegial obligation to leave enough room in the discussion for teachers to have their say. In satisfying these responsibilities, advisors find it difficult to organize and limit what they say. Conferences I and II, for different reasons and in different ways, illustrate the dangers of the swamp.

In Conference I, an advisor's insightful and cogent treatment of a teacher's interaction with her first grade students is lost to view when the advisor succumbs to the temptation to comment on everything: "I couldn't resist telling her what a wonderful teacher she is."

If Conference I could be disassembled, and the discussion of "interaction" taken by itself, it would look something like this:

To the teacher, interaction meant:

What are my physical movements in the classroom?

Am I paying more attention to some children than others?

From her observation of the teacher, the advisor concludes:

> The teacher is paying attention to all the children, and she is doing so in ways that are many and varied.
>
> The teacher keeps the group involved by providing "personalized" examples tied to children's own experience.
>
> The teacher insists on hand-raising to prevent a few students from dominating, calling out answers.
>
> The teacher creates an "accepting" environment in which students are comfortable responding.
>
> The teacher designs activities that require students to be actively involved, e.g., finding a partner.
>
> The teacher gives constructive and positive feedback to students.

Taken alone, the advisor's commentary on interaction provides an in-depth response to one of the teacher's two questions about interaction, offering several explanations for how she achieves the scale of participation she has in her first grade class. In context, however, the advisor's observations about interaction were threaded among numerous other topics; in addition to the items listed above, the advisor praises the teacher's ability to:

Use the chalkboard to create a visual model of an idea

Combine visual and auditory presentation

Check frequently and imaginatively for students' understanding

Make appropriate management decisions as the class unfolds

Give clear and appropriate directions

Give vivid and varied examples

Provide a variety of practice on new concepts

Monitor student progress

In this large company, the selected insights about interaction lose their coherence. In interviews after the conference, the advisor is hard on herself, groaning over what sounds to her like an endless list. The teacher feels flattered by compliments based in close observation; she simply reflects that the conference might have been even more satisfying had she helped the advisor to focus more closely on the two aspects of interaction she had in mind.

> It might have been a good thing for the two of us at the beginning to agree on how adamant am I that that's all she observe. Did I want her to put blinders on [to everything else]? Then we could have thrown out some ideas for procedures she could use. It would have been nice to see things on paper. Maybe a classroom map, with lines to show where I go and a check by each child that I ask... It's so nice to <u>see</u> it...

In Conference I, the advisor finds herself in a swamp created by having too much to say. In Conference II, another first year advisor finds himself in a swamp created by having too little to say. In the effort to place the initiative in the hands of the teacher ("I'd like you to critique this"), the advisor leaves himself with no independent ground on which to stand. The teacher, seeing himself for the first time on videotape and probably uncertain what a self-"critique" of his lesson might entail, watches in silence.

<u>Hard Evidence</u>

In schools accustomed to frequent, focused discussion of teaching among fellow professionals, well-designed observation methods are held in high regard. There are no disparaging remarks about the observer's clipboard. Teachers expect classroom observers to arrive at the door prepared to do a thorough and professional job of collecting and organizing relevant information (Little and Bird, 1984).

In the seven conferences, symmetry in the professional relations between advisor and teacher is accomplished in part by a set of objectified standards or guidelines (e.g., what it means to "teach to an objective," or what "Instructional Enrichment" is, or what the elements of a "synectics model" are). These standards and guidelines give direction and focus to the methods of classroom observation and to the record of classroom interaction assembled by the advisors.

Each of the seven advisors made records of classroom activity that could be shared with teachers for their independent examination and interpretation (see Table 3). Of the seven, two combined video playback and notes, four used extensive notes or charts, and one relied on video playback alone.

The use of "hard evidence" has the enthusiastic approval of teachers, who are impressed with the thorough attention to detail. Although the use of the video playback during a conference sometimes makes it difficult to maintain focus on one or two key issues, teachers suggest that a videotape offers a degree of specificity not possible with other methods.

> Now, if you had just been `in there' this morning, we would just talk about things. Even if you hadn't had a thorough record, we could talk about things, but it would never be as specific as this. So we can stop and look at something together and I could tell you what was going on in my mind and you can say what you thought was going on. In most cases it [what we talk about] seems to be very similar, but I think you lose that specificity.

In addition, the videotape sheds light on aspects of interaction that are not as persuasively portrayed with other observation methods.

> I was worried that I wasn't getting around to the children at the back or the far right and left rows. But I realized when I saw the tape that I was moving around a lot and getting around to everybody. [I, teacher interview].

Table 3

PRINCIPLES OF ADVISING: TALK ABOUT TEACHING

Tape	Is there a common understanding and a shared language?	Is there a focus?	What record of lesson used?
I	No Advisor uses "instructional skills" terminology. Teacher: "Some of these terms are new to me." Responses show limited shared understanding of key terms, but both describe the reasons for their individual comments.	Multiple: interaction plus general coverage of instructional skills	Video playback and notes made from tape
II	Uneven Teacher has attended training by advisors in instructional skills; teacher understands questions about objective, patterns of student involvement.	No	Video playback
III	Yes Teacher has attended training and used instructional skills categories in setting up focus for observation. Teacher does not use terminology during conference, but appears to understand advisor's use of terms.	Lesson "structure": transitions; directions; on task	Detailed notes taken in class, then annotated
IV	Uneven Advisor and teacher share "instructional skills" terminology, but not a detailed knowledge of the synectics model being demonstrated.	Elements of five-step lesson plan (detailed)	Notes taken during class, then annotated
V	Yes Teacher has attended training, uses key terms; advisor creates opportunity to strengthen shared understanding, and teacher helps by "thinking aloud."	Teaching to objective Learning modalities	Notes taken during class, then annotated
VI	Yes Teacher and advisor have reviewed principles and methods of "time on task," have discussed how it relates to pace of a lesson, have reviewed it with students prior to the observation.	Student time on task Lesson pacing	Time on task chart
VII	Yes Advisor and teacher have trained together both on instructional skills and on the Instructional Enrichment approach being tested in the lesson.	Implementation of instructional enrichment	Video playback plus notes

Clear focus, good data and strong talk. Judging by these episodes, a clear focus on central principles and practices of teaching and a shared grasp of classroom patterns and details support probing and questioning that might otherwise be problematic.

Conference V illustrates how clarity and specificity in focus and method enable the teacher and advisor to display curiosity or admit confusion, and to question one another in ways they might not ordinarily.

Prior to the conference, the teacher has asked the advisor to observe for "the objective." By virtue of their shared training in instructional skills, the advisor and teacher both understand that to mean that the advisor should observe whether an objective can be identified, whether it seems clear to students, and whether the activities of the lesson are sensibly related to the objective.

Early in the conference, the advisor reveals gently that she was uncertain what children were expected to learn:

> Help me find it if I'm wrong because I wasn't sure about this... but I wasn't sure if you told them what your objective was for them. They knew what the assignment was, but your objectives...

By asking the teacher to "help me find it if I'm wrong," the advisor defers to the teacher's more detailed grasp of her own lesson and class. By returning time and again to her detailed notes, however, the advisor also provides a basis on which she and the teacher together can judge whether the intended objective was clear to students.

The advisor persists in her questioning and probing. The teacher, in turn, thinks aloud about the lesson. Over a period of several minutes, the teacher arrives at a clear statement of the place

of this lesson in her overall goals for a class of fourth graders.

> V:11. I wanted for them to be able to answer the questions...
>
> V:12. I think it was mostly for them to give information to the other part of the class ...
>
> V:13. My primary objective was of course for them to learn the material...
>
> V:14. I've been wanting them to learn this. Fourth graders, this is the year in which they really start to study content material and are accountable for it. I want them to learn...how to approach subject matter. And that's been a very difficult thing for them to learn. It's taken them a long time and so I am seeing now the fruits of our labor. I mean, if they are able to pick out the important things to tell, that's the whole essential part of studying.

As they talk, both advisor and teacher gain additional insight into the lesson. It becomes clear that the lesson was directed to multiple ends, including students' cognitive skill in selecting main ideas from content material, students' social skill in teaching one another, and students' behavior as responsible members of a group. As she becomes conscious of the overlay of goals and strategies in the lesson she has designed, the teacher concludes:

> It would have been good if I had had that uppermost in my mind and [had] been able to delineate it. [V:12]

As the discussion unfolds, the potential benefits multiply. The teacher gains a new understanding of the subtleties and ramifications of a carefully crafted lesson, and leaves the conference with specific ideas to carry into her future lesson planning. The advisor gains an understanding of this teacher's pedagogical thinking, and leaves the conference with a grasp of context that she will use in observing future lessons. Both advisor and teacher arrive at a new and and more

rigorous standard for the joint work of teachers and advisors.

Through their face-to-face talk about teaching, advisors and teachers sharpen their understanding of basic principles and specific classroom realities. Their talk expands the pool of available concrete examples, and makes the connections among theory, research and practice more evident.

Face-to-face work on teaching also acquaints partners with one another's personal and professional preferences, histories and oddities. New partners treat each other gingerly. Old hands rest on the assurance of past encounters and plunge headlong into an examination of the lesson. When they stumble, as they inevitably do, their recovery is swift. In effect, they have established the set of relations that teachers sum up as "trust." Trust, it appears, is less a precondition of their work together than it is the fruit of their efforts.

Trust Among Colleagues

In their work with one another, the advisors and teachers must find a substitute for the trust that grows out of long-standing friendships or intimate family relationships. Their work, at its most productive, comes close to the classroom and close to the bone. Teachers and advisors must give one another reason to believe that they have something to offer each other and intend each other no harm.

Three principles evident in the conferences are:

I. Interaction

Skillful pairs engage in lively interaction with one another, making the conference a vehicle for joint work on teaching and as an opportunity to improve their ability to learn from one another.

Skillful advisors foster interaction by the way they arrange the physical setting, the introduction they give in the first two minutes, and the manner in which they use questions throughout the discussion.

II. Predictability

Skillful pairs build trust in one another's intentions by relying on a known, predictable set of topics, criteria and methods.

Skillful advisors are as clear about the observation and conference criteria and methods as they expect the teacher to be about instructional aims and methods.

III. Reciprocity

Skillful pairs build trust by acknowledging and deferring to one another's knowledge and skill, by talking to each other in ways that preserve individual dignity, and by giving their work together a full measure of energy, thought and attention.

Skillful advisors provide a model of reciprocity by showing their own willingness to improve, by showing serious attention to teachers' knowledge and experience, and by working as hard to observe well as teachers are working to teach.

Interaction

Advisors describe their conferences as vehicles for promoting collegiality. They place emphasis on interaction and dialogue; their aim is to build rapport and to equip ("empower") teachers to analyze their own work, to entertain new possibilities.

Getting the floor. The priority that advisors place on equal participation is evident throughout the seven conferences. Table 4 presents the findings on interaction from two perspectives. First, advisors and teachers are compared with respect to the amount of talking each does during the conference, represented as the number of lines of transcript print generated by each participant. Second,

Table 4

HOW INTERACTIVE ARE THE CONFERENCES?

	How Much Talk?*		How Many Long Turns?**	
Conference	Advisor	Teacher	Advisor	Teacher
I	397 (54%)	332 (46%)	37 (61%)	24 (39%)
II	195 (47%)	220 (53%)	13 (43%)	17 (57%)
III	356 (85%)	62 (15%)	7 (64%)	4 (36%)
IV	490 (53%)	435 (47%)	30 (50%)	30 (50%)
V	384 (53%)	347 (47%)	36 (55%)	30 (45%)
VI	505 (68%)	238 (32%)	20 (51%)	19 (49%)
VII	337 (49%)	352 (51%)	32 (52%)	30 (48%)
TOTALS	2664 (57%)	1986 (43%)	175 (53%)	154 (47%)
	[$\bar{x}$ = 381]	[$\bar{x}$ = 284]	[$\bar{x}$ = 25]	[$\bar{x}$ = 22]

*Numbers represent total lines of transcript print.

**Numbers represent turns of four or more lines of transcript print.

advisors and teachers are compared with respect to the number of "long" turns each takes in the discussion. To qualify as a long turn, the talk must go on long enough to leave some substantive mark on the discussion; for convenience, four lines of transcript print was designated a long turn.

Overall, advisors talk more--but not a lot more--than teachers. As a group, the advisors accounted for 57% of the talk generated in the conferences. In five of the seven conferences, advisors talked for approximately half the time. They exemplified the advisors' stated intention to promote equal participation.

There are two exceptions to the "equal time" pattern. In Conference I, a first-year advisor is the speaker for 85% of the talk, as she conducts a carefully prepared review of a first grade lesson. Ironically, the careful advance preparation that lends substance to the discussion also lures advisors into monologues. For the first eight pages of transcript, the teacher is silent. Watching the conference videotape afterward, the advisor is dismayed that she appeared to dominate the interaction so fully and that she left the teacher so few openings. The teacher was not troubled. "After all," she reflects, "I did give her three or four things to look for." She is impressed with the care and detail that the advisor has displayed, and fully expects that they will both do their part to make the next conference more interactive.

Similarly, an experienced advisor (Conference VI) accounts for almost 70% of the total talk in her conference, but the apparent imbalance comes as a surprise to those who have watched the conference or read the transcript. The advisor invites participation from the teacher from the start ("What do you think?") and throughout the

conference ("What did you feel about the student...?" "Did you notice that?" "What other things might you do...?"). Neither the subsequent observers nor teacher was left with the impression that the advisor dominated the discussion. In this instance, the disproportionate share of the talk done by the advisor is compensated by the dynamics of interaction, and by the way in which the teacher's contributions were elicited and treated.

Although advisors tend to talk longer when they get the floor, most conferences are in fact dialogues, with lengthy turns on both parts. Teachers, like advisors, described key events and offered explanations and analyses. In terms of substantive contributions, the interaction was not noticeably lop-sided.

The first two minutes. First words are crucial. In the opening moments of each conference, advisors convey their orientation toward the teacher as a colleague and toward the material at hand. Possibilities are opened up; limits are established. In the space of only moments, by a few words and gestures, the tone is set.

A place to work. Advisors arrange a physical setting for joint work, and engage in an important bit of theatre. Time is short. Lengthy explanations of "what we're here for" are unwieldy. By attention to setting, advisors convey a message about the conference that is clear even though unspoken. Advisors come prepared, supplied with videotapes or notes, paper and pen. They have arranged a private place to talk. A work table permits both partners to spread out materials, to take notes, draw diagrams, look at charts or lesson plans. For conferences in which lesson videotapes are displayed, a work table helps to define the situation as work and to break the

mindset that persons more routinely associate with "watching TV".

Figure 3 presents the physical configurations for each of the seven conferences. Some configurations more than others focus the participants' attention on recorded details of the lesson; some configurations more than others engage the participants with one another. In Scene 1, advisor and teacher are engaged least intensively with the material or with one another; in Scene 5, advisor and teacher are most fully engaged with the material and with one another.

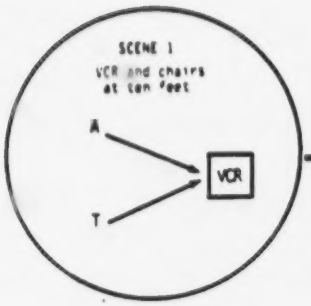
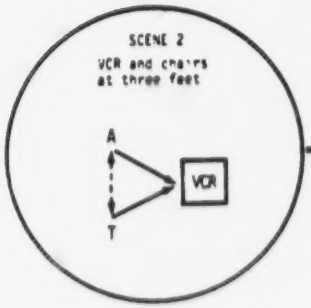
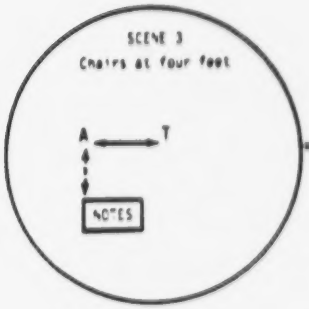
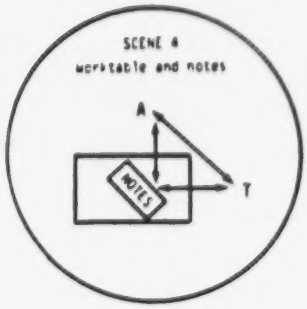
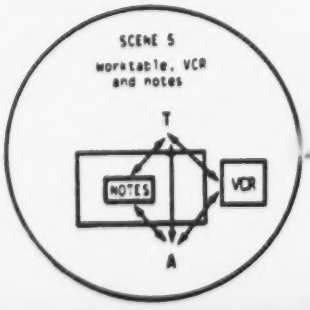
An invitation to participate. There is no mistaking, in the opening minutes of most conferences, that this event is intended as a dialogue. Of the seven tapes, five include an explicit invitation to teachers to comment on the lesson or to share in establishing direction for the conference. Some "invitations" are open-ended: "I'd like you to critique this," or "What did you think?" Others more fully delineate a set of ground rules and roles. In several conferences over a two year period, one advisor has gradually developed a "lead-in" that highlights the special knowledge that each person brings to the discussion, and the corresponding responsibility that each person bears to bring it off well. The advisor brings knowledge about current innovations in curriculum and instruction; the teacher brings her working knowledge of the "fit" between a broad idea, a specific lesson, and a class. The advisor explains:

> The kinds of decisions you are making, second to second, split second decisions to keep on course, to change the strategy, to ask a question, whatever it is, you are going to know what they are and I'm not, as I'm observing this. So you can stop this machine any time you want.

Checking out the boundaries. Advisors use the opening minutes to confirm agreements about the general focus and to establish

Figure 3

SETTING THE SCENE: PHYSICAL CONFIGURATIONS

	INVOLVEMENT WITH		CONFERENCES
	MATERIALS	PEOPLE	
	High	Low	II
	High	Moderate	I
	Low/Moderate	High	V
	Moderate/High	Moderate/High	III, IV, VI
	High	High	VII

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how much latitude that the advisor has to introduce topics:

> What I would like to do first of all so we keep it clear, what kind of feedback do you exactly want from me? [V:1]
>
> As we talked about it, you were interested in looking at your interaction with the children... [I:1]
>
> Last week when we had our pre-conference for this observation, you identified four things that you wanted me to look at. [III:1]
>
> If it's all right with you, I would like to make a couple of comments on your process of working with the kids today. How do you feel about that, is that putting you on the spot?

Keeping it equal. A pattern of equal participation hinges on a combination of thoughtful questions, probes and silences that are led and orchestrated by the advisor. Experienced advisors are adept at making openings for teachers to talk, and at listening attentively. In places where less experienced advisors make statements, more experienced advisors ask questions. Where beginning advisors draw conclusions, experienced advisors present teachers with the opportunity to talk about their teaching. The following excerpts from conferences III and V illustrate the differences. In Conference III, the constructions "obviously," "apparently," "I assume" or "I'm sure that.." leave the teacher with little to say:

> A: And then you started asking them some questions from a previous lesson. I assume you've been doing a unit on insects, or on moths and butterflies. And you asked them....
>
> A: Obviously that's a signal you use when you want to tell them something....
>
> A: I'm sure you were anticipating...

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T: Spillage.

A: Right, spillage, and getting up and trying to get the water. And you told them...

In Conference V, comments that "trail off" and questions that convey genuine curiosity keep the conversation moving:

T: My whole purpose seemed to be to clarify what they were saying, to help them express themselves, rather than to be teaching them a body of facts or information.

A: Ok, great, so you were talking about how they learned as well. You're talking about the feedback...

T: Yeah, just in general, in the beginning, when they were asking questions about how we were going to do today's work. I found that a lot of what I had to do was clarify...

A: ...How did you feel about all those questions?

T: It feels fine. What I have seen happen over the course of the year is that a class that wouldn't ask any questions at all...[now has] a lot of participation...

Predictability

In their basic approach to classroom observation and conferences, advisors rely on principles of clinical supervision. Without making the interaction stilted or mechanical, they attempt to be predictable to teachers with regard to topics and procedures. The conferences reflect four strategies for introducing a measure of certainty into the proceedings.

Discuss before observing ("pre-conference"). All but one of the conferences rely explicitly on agreements about topic made prior to the observation. In Conference VI, preparation included a prior observation that made the teacher familiar with the ideas and methods associated with time on task, followed in turn by another joint planning session. The observation discussed in Conference VI followed on the heels of a discussion held immediately prior to the lesson, in which the advisor discussed her plans to demonstrate a lesson using a "synectics model," and the teacher discussed his plans to "practice clinical supervision."

Review agreements on topic. Advisors in three conferences explicitly reviewed their understanding of the pair's prior agreements about topic. In conferences I and III, advisors confirmed their understanding with teachers as the conference began.

> A: As we talked about it, you were interested in looking at your interaction with the children and how you moved around the room...
>
> T: Right. [I:1]

In conference V, the advisor checks her agreements with the teacher at the outset, and then again as topics change throughout the conference:

> A: We sort of talked about the objective, but is there anything else? [V:1]
>
> A: I would like to make a couple of comments just on your process of working with the kids today. How do you feel about that, is that putting you on the spot? [V:2]
>
> A: The other thing you asked me to look at was the objective, right? [V:10]
>
> A: Oh, we could deal with that [learning modalities]. Do you want to deal with that? [V:21]

Make explicit suggestions about procedure. In four conferences, advisors make explicit suggestions or agreements regarding the procedure the pair might follow in the conference. In conference VII, the advisor proposes that both of them use the videotape "as a real tool to explore," each free to stop the action in order to raise comments or questions. She backs her proposal by a rationale and with a demonstration of how to work the machine. In conferences I and II, the advisors make a similar invitation to the teacher to stop the machine at will, but provides less in the way of a supporting rationale or method. In conference IV, both parties agree that the teacher-as-observer will put his clinical supervision training to work in providing feedback on the advisor's demonstration lesson; they both believe they share some sense of what a clinical supervision conference is.

Invite teachers to go first. Teachers are invited to sum up their own impressions of the lesson early in the development of three conferences. In addition to insuring a dialogue, this strategy helps the advisor to avoid mistakes of substance or tone.

> A: How did you feel this all went? The whole lesson? [I:2]
>
> A: What do you think? [VI:1, opening line]
>
> A: First of all, I'd like to see how you felt about the lesson, since you were doing something like a pioneer today. [V:2]

Reciprocity, Or, We're In This Together

The most successful, lively and vigorous of these conferences show an advisor and a teacher who appear "equally bound, equally invested, equally at risk, and equally energetic" (Bird and Little,

1983, p. 59).

Showing a commitment to new learning. In a remarkably gutsy and forthright manner, teachers invite advisors to take a close look at their teaching.

> A: I think since it is just your first time, rather than trying to scrutinize it, and look for some specific little piece...
>
> T: I do have one specific I want to mention now. When I start to lose the class, when they leave the debate and it gets really chaotic --I want you to tell me where you think it starts to disintegrate. [VII:1]

In turn, advisors ask teachers to help them become more skillful observers and interpreters of teaching:

> A: Now, about this conference. What was helpful... and what were some things I ought to drop?
>
> A: If you think of anything later, specifically [what would be] good stimulation for your thinking, I would really appreciate that. And anything that stopped your ability to explore in an open way. [VII:25-26]
>
> A: Now give me some feedback on the conference. How did this go? [VI:21]

Sharing the obligations and the risks. Advisors and teachers displayed (and added to) professional respect by sharing equally in the hard work to make their relations productive. As observers, the advisors came to classes prepared to work as hard at observing as they expected the teachers to work at teaching. In conferences, most advisors (even with some trepidation) lived up to an "obligation to inform." They presented thorough and thoughtful descriptions, and tried to back their questions and comments with a sound rationale ("the reason I'm asking is...") and sound evidence ("what I noticed

was..."). In turn, the teachers devoted their close attention to the record collected by the observer, joined in making sense of what happened, and entertained alternatives for the future.

Giving due credit. Advisors and teachers openly credit one another's knowledge, skill and experience. One advisor acknowledges that her own observations will be strengthened and refined--perhaps altered altogether--when placed against the teacher's own interpretations of a lesson. She says, "You know what you were thinking as you made split second decisions." Other advisors stop periodically to check their perceptions against the teachers' views of a class, a child, or an event. By the communication strategies they use ("perception checks," clarifying, paraphrasing), advisors both insure shared understanding and convey their serious attention to teachers' intentions, preferences and circumstances.

In turn, teachers put considerable weight on advisors' praise, ask advisors for suggestions, and give serious attention to well-considered comments.

> T: I could have said that, mmmh. I'm glad you pointed that out because those are the kinds of things I want to eliminate. [VII:16]
>
> T: I really respect you..and to have you say you thought it went well is real important to me.

How strong is the trust? In small and large ways, reciprocity was achieved and relations were built that presumably will stand up to disagreement and conflict. There were few instances of overt disagreement in the conferences. It was clear, however, both in conferences and in interviews that advisors and teachers do not always agree on basic pedagogical principles.

A first year advisor worries:

> I don't know how fast you can push it. I've only known this teacher a year. (Advisor interview)

But a third year advisor says:

> The ability to push hard on issues isn't a matter of chronological time. It's a matter of working together enough—on the same lesson with different classes, different lessons with a single class, and so on. (Advisor interview)

The third year advisor builds a portrait of diverse, frequent and focused work between teachers and advisors. The intensity, frequency and utility of their involvement substitutes for long term acquaintance in building trust that will withstand occasional confusion, uncertainty or disagreement.

Advisors' efforts to credit teachers' expertise and experience, set a relaxed tone, and build shared understanding go a long way to make the conferences work as they do. It does not seem beyond the capacity of these skilled and sensitive persons to extend their reach. With greater initiative, but no less professional respect, experienced advisors (working as members of an "experienced pair") sometimes take a stand on a topic worth examining, propose a course of action, or question the logic of a classroom strategy.

The human condition. The conferences, finally, are very human events. Advisors and teachers act toward one another with tact, good will and good humor. They laugh with each other, become excited together and confused together. There are occasional moments of strain and many more of genuine enjoyment.

CONCLUSION

A small set of videotapes show advisors and teachers at work together on the improvement of teaching. The tapes are impressive on many fronts. They show colleagues' well-informed and good faith efforts to lend close scrutiny to classroom teaching. They convince us that advisors, like teachers, do not need a flawless performance to get started on important work; the talk is often lively and vigorous, sometimes clumsy and halting. Finally, the tapes portray how advisors and teachers achieve durable, productive, rewarding relations by being attentive to the quality of small, moment-by-moment exchanges.

The principles and skills of advising are central to any improvement-related initiative that rests heavily on joint work on teaching, ranging from teacher preparation to team-based innovation, peer observation, "coaching," or clinical supervision. At stake are substantial gains in professional support for learning to teach and for the steady improvement of schools.

The advisor role has been examined here primarily from two standpoints: (1) the advisor as a colleague who models productive and vigorous professional relations, and (2) the advisor as a knowledgeable senior colleague whose demonstrated knowledge, skill and energy warrant the title of advisor and the rights to initiative and leadership that go with it.

The advisors' own conception of their work, and the history of related positions in teachers' centers, lean heavily toward the first definition: the responsible colleague. In light of contemporary pressures--and opportunities--to expand the leadership roles

within the teaching profession, we have also pressed the issue of advisors' leadership prospects.

The distinction between leadership and facilitation has been deliberately overdrawn in this report. In caricature, the central questions, challenges and dilemmas posed by the advisor role are revealed. In practice, the lines will be less clear. As we follow new efforts to invest the teaching career with richer opportunities and rewards, and to marshall teachers' talents and experience for the improvement of schooling, however, we will do well to keep the less subtle construction in mind.

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